

Vote by Mail Stamp Act

Congresswoman Deb Haaland (NM-01)

The problem. In April, just as the COVID-19 Pandemic was getting started, then-Postmaster General Megan Brennan informed the House Committee on Oversight and Reform that the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) would go bankrupt by the end of this fiscal year – just weeks away now. The USPS requested \$25 billion to cover the increased needs during the pandemic.

Upon his appointment to the position of Postmaster General, Louis DeJoy, who is a major donor to President Trump's reelection campaign, implemented dangerous operational changes aimed at sabotaging the 2020 election by creating mail delays. Additionally, states and territories need financial support to smoothly make the transition to vote by mail. The Heroes Act included \$3.6 billion for state and local governments to make their election systems safe for voters and poll workers under pandemic conditions. This money is critical to states, but the bill remains on a pile with hundreds of bills on Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's desk.

The solution. Grassroots movements of people buying postal stamps to show support for the USPS's role in the United States led Congresswoman Deb Haaland to write the Vote by Mail Stamp Act. The bill will empower USPS patrons to support vote by mail by creating a new semipostal stamp that funds a new grant program administered by the U.S. Elections Assistance Commission. States and territories can apply for this new grant to help strengthen mail-in voting systems so they are ready for an increased volume of mail-in ballots in any election under any circumstance. The usual cost of a stamp will continue to go to the USPS, allowing people within the U.S. to show support for the Postal Service and for safe, secure voting.

Background

The USPS delivers prescription medications, Social Security benefits, paychecks, tax returns and ballots to families across the country. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 public health crisis, many government agencies face additional challenges as the country works to contain the virus. To facilitate safe elections in which all votes are counted without voters risking their health to vote, many states have encouraged voting by mail. Most states need infrastructure to help implement this change and, given budget shortfalls this year, the states require extra support to ensure reliable elections. The Postal Service plays a vital role in delivering ballots to American citizens and returning them to election officials.

In less than 10 weeks on the job, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, implemented devastating changes to the Postal Service including new programs to limit overtime, leave mail at sorting locations, and remove mail sorting machines. President Trump publicly announced that he hopes disruptions to the mail will negatively impact people's ability to vote by mail and have their votes counted. Documents obtained by the House Committee on Oversight and Reform show that DeJoy was aware of how damaging those changes would be and moved forward anyway. DeJoy also refuses to reinstall sorting machines and mailboxes that have been removed.

The Vote by Mail Stamp Act specifically:

- Creates the Voting by Mail Semipostal Stamp to be made swiftly available for a period of 10 years.
- Transfers additional revenue raised by the Voting by Mail Semipostal Stamp to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission to fund grants to states and territories to support voting by mail.
- Continues to provide the revenue generated from the base cost of the stamp to the U.S. Postal Service.
- Prevents any funds raised from the stamp from being offset as Congress determines appropriations for the 10 years that the stamp is available.